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Testimony of Christine Pulice of the Primary Care Center at Connecticut Children's Medical Center  
**IN SUPPORT OF SB 209,**  
AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR THE REACH OUT AND READ PROGRAM  
Before the Connecticut General Assembly's Committee on Children  
February 5, 2015

To Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and members of the Committee on Children,

My name is Christine Pulice, a third year pediatric resident through the University of Connecticut's Pediatric Residency Program. I work primarily out of Connecticut Children's Medical Center and the associated Primary Care Center in Hartford, Connecticut. This Primary Care Center provides care to more than 15,000 children from the greater Hartford region, and is the largest pediatric primary care center between New York City and Boston. I am writing today to support Senate Bill 209, An Act Concerning Funding for the Reach Out and Read Program.

As a pediatric resident who works in the underserved community of Hartford, I have first-hand experience with poverty and the impact on literacy. Many of the parents of my patients have difficulty with reading and writing, and some are fully illiterate. Reach Out and Read has been an important part of breaking the cycle of illiteracy in communities such as Hartford. At our clinic, we provide a book that is developmentally appropriate at each well child visit for children ages 6 months to 5 years. To date, there have been 15 peer-reviewed research studies that have shown that children who receive books from the Reach Out and Read program show advancement of 3 to 6 months ahead their peers on vocabulary tests by 2 years of age. These studies were conducted in over 10 different states, including Connecticut, making this issue even more relevant to our state. Furthermore, research has shown that children who begin school with appropriate vocabulary and development for their age are more likely to be successful not only in education, but in social aspects of life.

One of the most striking memories I have regarding my Hartford pediatric practice and the Reach Out and Read Program occurred when I first began working there in 2012. I had established a relationship with a Spanish-speaking mother whom had just moved to the United States from El Salvador. She brought her 6 month old daughter in for her first visit, and when I provided her with the first book at that time, she was surprised, and stated that they did not have any books at home for her daughter. I have since seen the child turn 2 years old, and she now has a collection of almost 10 bilingual books that our clinic was able to provide through Reach Out and Read. Her mother confided in me at her 2 year visit that they would not have been able to buy these books due to financial restraints, and that starting to read with her daughter has helped with both her daughter's language development, and with building her own vocabulary of English words.